

ROTC

Developments and Prospects



Colonel Arthur T. Coumbe, US Army Reserve

Times change. So do resilient organizations, but they never forsake the fundamentals that make them great. Over the years the Reserve Officer Training Corps surged to meet the nation's needs—so much so that it now provides the bulk of the Army's active-duty officers. Arthur T. Coumbe explains some of the recent changes to standardize training and quality, strengthen command and control, empower local officials and provide the Army with great lieutenants.

SINCE ITS ESTABLISHMENT in April 1986, the US Army Cadet Command has been transformed from a decentralized organization turning out a highly variegated group of junior officers into a centralized command producing lieutenants of high and, given the intellectual, social and cultural diversity of the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) institutional base, uniform quality. Three things helped transform precommissioning preparation—standardized training, improved leadership assessment and development, and an enlarged and improved command and control apparatus. The consensus among senior army leaders is that ROTC lieutenants accessed into the Army after 1986 have been the best in the program's 83-year history.¹

The ROTC program has not fared as well quantitatively as it has qualitatively. In the past decade, officer requirements have dropped sharply—from 8,200 in 1989 to just 3,800 in 1999. Additionally, the propensity of college-aged youth to join the military or enroll in the ROTC has dropped even more sharply, and throughout the 1990s, the program has struggled to meet its production mission. To accommodate the post-Cold War world, the command has attempted to preserve relevant aspects of the program and redesign other parts to better prepare the ROTC and its cadets for the demands of the new century.²

Personnel constraints have posed some of the most formidable problems for the ROTC program. As the Army has made deep cuts in table of distribution and allowance (TDA) organizations such as the Cadet Command to fill line units, the ROTC program dropped from 416 units and more than 2,400 full-time officers in 1989 to 270 units and approxi-

mately 1,300 full-time officers in 1999. The reductions have strained ROTC cadre in all functional areas but none more so than in recruiting since recruiting is the only truly discretionary part of a unit's routine.³

Alternative staffing. A number of "staffing alternatives" have been tested to try to find ways to alleviate the situation, one of which uses contract ROTC instructors. A test of this option began in School Year 1997-1998, with MPRI, a professional services firm headquartered in Arlington, Virginia, providing the instructors. Cadet Command added some restrictive clauses to the MPRI contract relative to the use and quality of the retiree and reservist instructors, including requirements to meet Army height and weight standards and pass the Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT). The contract also stipulated that officer applicants must have served at least eight years and enlisted applicants at least 15 years to be eligible for employment. Experience as a company commander, in the case of officers, or as a platoon sergeant, in the case of noncommissioned officers, was listed as a highly desirable characteristic. In addition, the contract specified that no one who had been retired for more than two years could be hired.⁴

The results have been encouraging. The RAND Corporation, the organization responsible for evaluating the test, has reported that units participating in the experiment were performing every bit as well as other units. ROTC cadre and senior officers in the chain of command have given the contract instructors high marks.

In another simultaneous staffing alternative test, reservists assigned to Troop Program Units (TPUs) have been used as ROTC instructors. The distribution of reserve units, the skills and qualifications of available reservists and other factors have contributed to mixed results. Most significantly, work scheduling restrictions sacrifice one of the most important aspects of the ROTC program—the frequent and regular face-to-face interaction between cadet and instructor.⁵ Still, many feel that the TPU option has potential. While drilling reservists may not always be able to replace full-time cadre, they can often effectively augment them, doing such tasks as planning and overseeing specific events and running field training exercises. A final decision on this staffing alternative will be made at the end of School Year 2000-2001 when the test is scheduled to conclude.⁶

Organizational streamlining. Organizational streamlining began in 1992 when one of the four region headquarters was eliminated. By 1996, five of 18 brigade headquarters had been eliminated. In 1997 the region headquarters sizes were cut in half and some of the spaces were transferred to the national and the brigade headquarters. The command realized a net savings of 121 spaces.⁷

More significant than the number of spaces saved, however, was the functional realignment that took place. As a result of this realignment, the regions retained their command and control responsibilities but lost many of their administrative and logistic functions. Brigades, on the other hand, took on more oversight responsibilities. Cadet Command headquarters assumed more centralized control over administration and logistics, resulting in more standardization and improved quality control.

A number of "staffing alternatives" have been tested to try to find ways to alleviate the personnel reductions, one of which uses contract ROTC instructors. The results have been encouraging. The RAND Corporation, the organization responsible for evaluating the test, has reported that units participating in the experiment were performing every bit as well as other units.

Automation. Structural streamlining would not have been feasible without the command's simultaneous automation. E-mail now links together all command echelons and office software is standardized. Forms, along with regulations, policy guidance, publications and training support packages are available over the Internet. This evolving Internet-based information system, the Cadet Command Information Management System (CCIMS), provides for more record and document visibility. Reports that previously took weeks or months to reach units are now accessible almost as soon as they are completed. At advanced camp, enhanced data processing capabilities significantly reduces paperwork and administration time by several orders of magnitude.

Selective decentralization of authority. Cadet Command has mitigated personnel shortages by transferring decision-making authority from the national to the battalion level. This decentralization has proven particularly helpful in administration, where the authority to make certain

personnel decisions (deferments for attendance at advanced camp, some enrollment eligibility waivers and scholarship termination actions) has expedited processing and eliminated some forms entirely. Correspondence processing was streamlined as well with actions that formerly passed through brigade and region headquarters now flow directly from battalion to national headquarters.⁸

Technology enhanced instruction. The command has also embraced technology-enhanced instruction to mitigate the effects of lower budgets and staffing levels. In 1998 the command established a high-tech test bed of six host ROTC units to test various distance-learning methodologies. Participating schools (the University of Delaware, West Virginia University, the University of Wyoming, the University of Southern Mississippi, Pennsylvania State University and the University of Washington) received liquid crystal display projectors and additional computers to conduct the experiment. The test is yielding particularly promising results at the University of Delaware, where video-conferencing has been combined with "video streaming" over the Internet to transmit military instruction to two partnership institutions—Salisbury State University and the University of Maryland, Eastern Shore. Cadets at these

latter two schools can now access ROTC classes at their own leisure.

Training. Within the ROTC program, no other functional area has seen more improvement over the past five years than training. The consolidation of advanced camp at Fort Lewis, Washington, in 1997, has been the principal factor in this improvement. This initiative permitted a common application of standards under identical conditions, resulting in a more uniform ROTC product and a more fair accessions process.



US Army



Additionally, that same year advanced camp was shortened from six weeks to five without any degradation of training, primarily by eliminating time-off and downtime. As a by-product of the consolidation, Fort Bragg, North Carolina, regained valuable training space and the Army saved 2,500 summer camp support spaces and an estimated three million dollars.

Advanced camp training has become more challenging as well. While summer training was tough, stressful and demanding, it had become predictable—tactical exercise operations orders and battle drill scripting were more a reflection of cadre efforts than cadets' ability. Since the "unscripting" of advanced camp in the summer of 1997, variables in the squad and platoon tactical exercise lanes make cadets react to unanticipated situations. The patrol at the Army's Ranger School replaced the battle drill as the advanced camp exercise model.⁹

Abetting and encouraging cadets to be more multidimensional has been another of the command's priorities. Preparation for advanced camp had become so intensive and time-consuming that it tended to crowd out other important aspects of cadet life, such as academics and extra-curricular activities. The command took several steps to restore balance in the program and in cadets. First, the command revised the cadet evaluation system (CES) to award more credit for participation in activities outside of ROTC. Second, the time demands on cadets during the academic year were reduced by restricting field training exercises to one per semester. Third, mini-camps designed to prepare cadets for advanced camp were eliminated. Finally, certain military skills tests, such as rifle marksmanship, were changed from scored to pass or fail events. The emphasis on more efficient and effective training has resulted in better summer camp performance.¹⁰

While summer training was tough, stressful and demanding, it had become predictable. Since the "unscripting" of advanced camp in the summer of 1997, variables in the squad and platoon tactical exercise lanes make cadets react to unanticipated situations. The patrol at the Army's Ranger School replaced the battle drill as the advanced camp exercise model.



A new program ties scholarships to individual schools giving the local professor of military science (PMS) authority to select scholarship winners and control costs. With the new authority, the PMS gained more flexibility and a greater ability to exploit the local recruiting environment. It is also expected that the new scholarship program will change the profile of the scholarship winner; in the new system, more weight will be attached to leadership potential and motivation for military service and somewhat less to standardized test scores.

Recruiting and retention. As the propensity for military service among college-age youth has dropped, financial incentives have assumed an increasingly important place in ROTC recruiting and retention efforts. In 1999, 69 percent of contracted ROTC cadets were scholarship recipients, up from 33 percent a decade ago. To improve the scholarship selection process, Cadet Command introduced the Campus-Based Scholarship Program (CBSP) in the spring of 1998. The new program ties scholarships to individual schools giving the local professor of military science (PMS) authority to select scholarship winners and control costs while replacing the complex four-tier system with one level of award (which has a \$16,000 ceiling). With the new authority, the PMS gained more flexibility and a greater ability to exploit the local recruiting environment. It is also expected that the new scholarship program will change the profile of the scholarship winner; in the new system, more weight will be attached to leadership potential and motivation for military service and somewhat less to standardized test scores.¹¹

Boosting the monthly ROTC stipend has been a key part of Cadet Command's retention strategy. The stipend was increased from \$100 to \$150 per month in the fiscal year (FY) 1995 Defense Authorization Bill, the first such increase since November 1971, and it was raised again to \$200 per month beginning in FY 2000.¹²

To strengthen its recruiting efforts and leverage outside resources, Cadet Command has entered into a cooperative relationship with the US Army Recruiting Command (USAREC). The new arrangement calls for greater information exchange, more resource sharing (such as influence funds, advertising vans, Old Guard, Golden Knights and Marksmanship Team use of the USAREC distribution facility at Fort Knox) and a closer partnership between the ROTC battalions and the local recruiting ele-

ments. In addition, an innovative initiative—the on-campus recruiter program—began testing in January 2000 at 16 different ROTC battalions. At test schools, recruiters will work out of local ROTC units and recruit for both officer and enlisted requirements.¹³

The last several years have been a defining period for the Army ROTC program. During this time, Cadet Command has adapted to the conditions and demands of a changing culture and generation while preserving the relevant aspects of its heritage. While performing this balancing act, the command has experimented with alternative staffing models, streamlined its headquarters structure, improved training, consolidated advanced camp, automated its administration and command and control systems, decentralized decision-making authority, revised its scholarship selection system and reenergized its recruiting and retention efforts. It is too early to tell how effective the recent changes will be in the long run because results from a commissioning program like the ROTC can take two to four years to materialize in the force. Certainly, however, amid the changes and adjustments over the past several years, the ROTC has proven to be the enduring, essential source for the Army's Active, Reserve and National Guard commissioned officers. **MR**

In 1998 the command established a high-tech test bed of six host ROTC units to test various distance-learning methodologies. The test is yielding particularly promising results at the University of Delaware, where video-teleconferencing has been combined with "video streaming" over the Internet to transmit military instruction to two partnership institutions—Salisbury State University and the University of Maryland, Eastern Shore.

NOTES

1. ROTC Future Lieutenant Study (Fort Monroe, VA: US Army Cadet Command, 1999), 2.
2. Briefing Slide, ATCC-MO, "Mission and Production Over Time," 9 February 1999.
3. MAJ Timothy J. Northrup, "Review of Cadet Command Scholarships and Production," Unpublished Information Paper, Personnel and Administration Division, US Army Cadet Command, April 1988; and Briefing Slide, ATCC-MO, "Officer Shortfall," 9 February 1999.
4. Interview with LTC C. Hardy, ATCC-MO, Chief, Operations and Evaluation Directorate, 5 November 1999; Briefing Slide, ATCC-MO, "Alternative Staffing Test," 9 February 1999; Charles A. Goldman, Bruce R. Orvis, Michael G. Mattock, and Dorothy A. Smith, *Staffing Army ROTC at Colleges and Universities: Alternatives for Reducing the Use of Active-Duty Soldiers* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1999), 16-17; and Interview with MAJ C. Neely, ATCC-MO, Operations Research/Systems Analysis (ORSA), Operations and Evaluation Directorate, 16 November 1999.
5. Briefing Slides, ATCC-MO, "Alternative Staffing Test," and "Alternative Staffing Effects," 9 February 1999; Briefing Slide, ATCC-MO, "CC Position: Replacement," 4 June 1998; and Goldman et al., *Staffing Army ROTC at Colleges and Universities*, 19.
6. Interview with COL R. Morrow, ATCC-AR, Assistant Chief of Staff, Army Reserve, 30 October 1999; and Interview with COL C. Lambert, ATCC-NG, Assistant Chief of Staff, National Guard, 3 November 1999.
7. Fact Sheet, ATCC-RM, Francis Holloway, 12 August 1999, Subject: Total Cadet Command Authorizations; and Interview with Jo Gay, ATCC-RM, 11 August 1999.
8. Interview with Janet Baker, ATCC-PC, Personnel Actions and Standards Division, Personnel and Administration Directorate, 5 August 1999; and Memorandum, ATCC-PC, MG Stewart W. Wallace, FOR Deputy Commanding General, USACC and Region Commanders, 12 January 1998, Subject: Streamlining Cadet Actions Requests.
9. Interview with COL R. Mackey, Commander, 4th Region, 26 July 1999.
10. Memorandum, ATCC-ZA, MG Stewart W. Wallace, Commander, USACC to the Honorable Sara E. Lister, ASA (M&RA), THRU CG, TRADOC, 1 May 1997, Subject: 180-day Report; and US Army Cadet Command, *1996 Annual History* (Fort Monroe, VA: USACC, 1997), 3.
11. Interview with J. Ainslie, ATCC-PS, Chief, Scholarship and Accessions Management Division, Personnel and Administration Directorate, 11 September 1999.
12. Slide, ATCC-MO, "Legislative Update," 9 February 1999.
13. Memorandum, ATCC-MO, MG Stewart Wallace FOR All Cadet Command Region/Brigade/Battalion Commanders, 4 October 1999, Subject: Partnership with US Army Recruiting Command; Interview with M. Johnson, ATCC-MM, Marketing, Recruiting and Contracting Division, Marketing and Public Affairs Directorate, 5 November 1999; and Memorandum, ATCC-ZA, MG Stewart W. Wallace FOR Region, Brigade and Battalion Commanders, 30 March 1999, Subject: Policy Memorandum 50—US Army Recruiting Command (USAREC) Partnership Initiatives.

Colonel Arthur T. Coumbe, US Army Reserve, is the command historian, US Army Cadet Command, Fort Monroe, Virginia. He received a B.S. from the US Military Academy, West Point, New York and a Ph.D. from Duke University. He is a graduate of the Army Management Staff College, Fort Belvoir, Virginia. As a US Army Reserve officer, he served in a variety of command and staff positions, to include deputy commander, 902d Military Intelligence (MI) Group, Fort Meade, Maryland; and commander, 260th MI Battalion, Miami, Florida. He served as an adjunct faculty member at the University of California at Berkeley, Florida State University, St. Leo College and Thomas Nelson Community College. He has authored numerous articles and books on Army ROTC history and the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71.